

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 3-AWASHINGTON TIMES
15 November 1985

Yurchenko repeats his charges; CIA reaffirms denials

By Bill Gertz
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The Central Intelligence Agency again yesterday rejected charges made in Moscow by Soviet KGB official Vitaly Yurchenko that he was held captive and drugged by the CIA before his "escape" to the Soviet Embassy compound last week.

The denial was issued at the same time CIA Director William J. Casey released a letter to Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Dave Durenberger, Minnesota Republican, criticizing the chairman's handling of congressional oversight as "off-the-cuff" policy that has "gone seriously awry."

The letter was issued in response to newspaper reports quoting Mr. Durenberger as being dissatisfied with Mr. Casey and the CIA's handling of the Yurchenko case.

Mr. Durenberger, in a letter to The Washington Post, said the newspaper "has done a great disservice to me and to the director of central intelligence." He said the committee had no plans to restructure the CIA, as that newspaper reported, or to diminish the director's role, and that it has not scheduled a vote on whether Mr. Casey should resign over the Yurchenko affair.

The "re-defection" of Mr. Yurchenko has focused renewed attention on the CIA and Mr. Casey's management of the intelligence agency.

CIA spokesman Patti Volz said Mr. Yurchenko's latest Moscow allegations "are absolutely ridiculous."

When asked if the CIA planned to release details of information provided by Mr. Yurchenko during his purported defection, she said the agency planned to issue no further response to Mr. Yurchenko's allegations "at this time."

"As far as we're concerned, we have more important things to do than to respond to obvious Soviet propaganda like that," she said.

Ms. Volz said the agency hopes U.S. media "won't lend itself to such a transparent Soviet [propaganda] effort."

The State Department said last month that Mr. Yurchenko defected

to the United States in Rome last August. He walked away from a Georgetown restaurant Nov. 2 and two days later was featured at a Soviet Embassy press conference where he charged the CIA with kidnapping and drugging him.

A dispute has arisen within the U.S. government over whether Mr. Yurchenko was a bona fide defector who changed his mind or was sent by Moscow as a disinformation agent.

The CIA maintains Mr. Yurchenko was a legitimate defector and released last week a lengthy biography indicating he held a senior post in the Soviet secret police.

So far, there have been no arrests or expulsions of Soviet agents and no public revelations about Soviet agent networks in North America, actions Mr. Yurchenko could have precipitated based on his career profile.

Some members of the Senate Intelligence Committee and the National Security Council have said they suspect Mr. Yurchenko was a plant.

Mr. Yurchenko made his first public appearance in the Soviet Union yesterday where he told a crowded Moscow press conference that during his two months of captivity, the CIA forced him to sunbathe and "made me go in for sports, even play golf" in an effort make him appear healthy after being forced to take drugs.

He said shortly before his "escape," he was taken by a CIA security official to a men's clothing store, where he telephoned the Soviet Embassy.

The CIA official then took him to a "French restaurant [and] forced me to eat French food in Georgetown. . . I was at the end of my tether — it was freedom or death," Mr. Yurchenko said.

Using a coat, hat and umbrella he purchased from the men's store, Mr. Yurchenko said he was able to disguise himself and slip out of the restaurant past a line of CIA surveillance cars as he made his way back to the Soviet Embassy compound several blocks away.

Mr. Yurchenko, reading from a prepared text yesterday, said as a result of his actions, "there will be a lot of internal changes in the CIA."

Intelligence experts speculate that Mr. Yurchenko may have been sent to the United States as a double agent to disrupt and demoralize the CIA, or possibly to cast doubt on information from other recent KGB

An administration official, in a background briefing, said there were signs from the press conference that Soviet officials were preparing to imprison Mr. Yurchenko in a psychiatric prison hospital.

Dr. Nikolai Zharikov of the Soviet Academy of Sciences said at the news conference that Mr. Yurchenko's tale "shows that it was made by a person who lived through torture by monsters of cruelty from Langley," the location of CIA headquarters.

He said Mr. Yurchenko suffered "an acute organic damage of the brain" as the result of being fed "psychotropic drugs" and now shows signs of emotional instability, including "special psychotic states," and that he has trouble with motor functions and cries easily.

"This gives them an excuse to put him in a mental institution once they get enough press conferences out of him," the official said. "The business about brain deterioration and psychotic states — that's a tipoff on how they're going to solve this."

Experts believe Mr. Yurchenko's public charges against the CIA are a ploy to prevent the United States from raising the issue of Soviet human rights violations at the upcoming summit meeting in Geneva.

Georgetown University professor Roy Godson, an expert on Soviet disinformation tactics, said the second Yurchenko press conference, only five days before President Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev meet in Geneva, is part of a Soviet effort to "heighten the campaign" against discussing human rights at the summit.

"To cynically exploit the incident five days before the summit tells us that they are defensive on the human rights issue and on cue to heighten the consciousness on their slogan. 'The arms race is the future of the human race,'" Mr. Godson said in an interview.